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What is the purpose of the Remote Management software that has now been installed on campus faculty computers? Is it true that the software can be used to conduct real-time surveillance of faculty computer usage?

Submitted by John Howard Brown

8/30/2006

Question:

What is the purpose of the Remote Management software that has now been installed on campus faculty computers? Is it true that the software can be used to conduct real-time surveillance of faculty computer usage?

Rationale:

Subjecting members of the faculty to covert surveillance is a violation of constitutional rights and academic freedom both of which ought to be foremost concerns of the Faculty Senate.

Response:

Minutes: 9/21/2006 Pat Humphrey (COST) Senate Moderator: The next RFI concerns Zenworks and Remote Management Software. Question being: Is it being used for covert surveillance of faculty. The answer is, no, it was primarily purchased so they

[Computer Services] could push updates from IT to the individual computers. It does have that remote capability [of surveillance]; however, it's not enabled. In the past, it has been enabled in some certain circumstances, periodically, on rare occasions, when other outside evidence showed that it was warranted. Just a reminder: Your computers are University property; they should be used for University business.

The following response comes from Lisa Spence, IT Services Division

Background: Zenworks is an application that allows for remote and automated management of desktops on a network, and is provided as part of the Novell product suite. Generally speaking, Zenworks gives us a way to “push” software out to workstations on the network, and to execute other maintenance- and upgrade-oriented actions against machines in groups or individually without having to visit workstations individually.

Recent Activity: As a part of our efforts to improve the security of the computing environment around campus, we have defined a policy outlining requirements for passwords, anti-virus software, etc. Please see our policy document (Information Technology Security Standards and Guidelines) for more information. Password standards related to workstation and network access can be set up and administered using Zenworks. For example, we are requiring a particular password standard for Novell and Windows sign-on. This “policy” can be pushed to a workstation and administered by Zenworks.

In order to establish these policies across all machines connected to the Georgia Southern network, the decision was made to load Zenworks on all network-attached machines. This allows us to “push” these security-related policies and maintain them in the future without having to send support technicians to every machine on campus.

Use of Zenworks to Monitor Faculty Activity Without Their Knowledge: For further information about practices associated with the management of University technology resources, please see the Computer Use Policy at:

http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/provost/policies/Georgia_Southern_University_CUP.pdf

As a matter of practice, Zenworks will not be used to monitor or examine the activity or content of a faculty member's workstation without that faculty member's knowledge. In

short, we will only use this tool in a positive way to improve our services to customers, and to help us maintain the security and stability of the campus computing environment.

Addition from Pat Humphrey (SEC): While IT Services does not have the personnel (or interest, at least for now) to monitor our computer usage, it might behoove all faculty/staff to be aware of the issues currently in the public eye. See the article in the September 11 issue of Time (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1531312,00.html>), or the page 1 article of the September 12 Georgeanne. For now, remote monitoring is NOT enabled, and has been enabled only for select computers when outside evidence has warranted it.